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RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MELBOURNE 000056

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/A TOM REOTT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [AS](#)

SUBJECT: MELBOURNE BASED AFGHAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ON  
HIS POLICY PLATFORM

REF: CANBERRA 278

Classified By: Justin Kolbeck, Pol/Econ Officer for reasons 1.4(b)(d)

#### Summary

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¶1. (C) Abdul Khaliq Fazal, former Afghan Minister for Public Works (2001-2004) and declared presidential candidate in the August election, shared his initial policy platform with Consul General on April 27. If elected, Fazal says he will strengthen political parties and introduce a Prime Minister in order to give minority tribes a voice in government. He said he will work to remove Mujahadeen-era intelligence officers from senior posts in Afghanistan and will adopt a "tough stance" vis-a-vis Iran. Fazal, who has lived in Melbourne for the better part of thirty years, will return to Afghanistan to campaign on May 1. This cable includes highlights of Fazal's platform; the full version of his "policy agenda" has been sent to the Afghanistan desk. End Summary.

#### Campaign Underway

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¶2. (C) Abdul Khaliq Fazal, a Melbourne-based businessman and declared candidate for the Afghan presidential election, briefed Consul General on his campaign plans and future platform. Fazal, whose heart condition (NFI) had prevented him from returning to Afghanistan sooner, intends to travel to Kabul on May 1 to begin campaigning. He noted, however, that he will wait until the official commencement of campaign activities on June 18 before he begins his efforts in earnest. Ray Stuart, one of Fazal's Australian campaign managers who accompanied him to the meeting, admitted that they are off to a late start, but claimed that the other candidates are also "scrambling" and that if President Karzai does not stand for reelection, the "field will be open."

¶3. (C) Fazal said he enjoys strong support among overseas Afghans in Australia and in Dubai. Despite having served as Minister of Public Works from 2001-2004 in the Afghan Interim Government, Fazal said he has clashed with President Karzai over "corruption among current Ministers and Governors." Karzai, he continued, is under too much pressure from warlords and drug dealers, however, to act. He told Consul General in confidence that President Karzai's term in office "had been wasted" due to too many opportunities lost. Fazal believes his support base in his home province of Kandahar is still strong despite his having lived in Australia for the better part of the last thirty years. He will represent the Initiative for National Unity Party of Afghanistan and said that he has over 640 registered campaign workers throughout the country's 34 provinces.

Pakistan

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¶4. (C) Responding to Consul General's query about his views on Pakistan, Fazal said ties forged in the 1980's between intelligence officials on both sides of the Durand Line remain strong and are at the center of problems in the Northwest Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. If elected President, Fazal said he would push to remove this generation of intelligence officials from senior positions in Afghanistan and would lobby Pakistan to do the same. Echoing an oft-heard refrain, Fazal remarked that "Pakistan's government, whether the civilian leadership knows it or not, is providing support to the Taliban and al-Qaeda."

Iran

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¶5. (C) Fazal explained his position on Iran by way of the following anecdote. While serving as Minister for Public Works, he discovered that an Iranian government-sponsored construction company was building a road linking Herat with Iran. According to Fazal, Herat's Governor had approved the road project without first notifying him. Fazal said he "strongly reprimanded" Iran's Ambassador and "kicked the workers out of Afghanistan." While the road was eventually completed during Fazal's tenure, he said that Iran is "religiously and culturally interfering in Afghanistan" and should "be dealt with firmly."

Reconciliation

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¶6. (C) Given Afghanistan's multi-tribal composition, Fazal proposes to introduce a Prime Minister via Constitutional amendment which would enable minority tribes (non-Pashtuns) to have a voice in national leadership. He claimed that the current system gives the President too much power due to the ability to appoint Governors and one third of the country's Senators. Overcoming Afghanistan's long struggle with reconciliation, Fazal believes, will be directly tied to giving minority groups a definitive say in governance. (Note: Fazal is a Pashtun himself and says he was childhood friends with President Karzai, and a former royalist. End note.)

Comment

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¶7. (C) While his policy platform highlights the need for Afghanistan to remain "neutral," Fazal did note that "without the support of the United States, Afghanistan will never stand on its own." His six-page policy outline is broad and his campaign is still in the very early stages, but Fazal appeared committed to making a genuine run at the presidency. Although he has spent the majority of the last three decades residing in Australia, Fazal was confident that his political support in Afghanistan remains robust.

THURSTON